



Early Journal Content on JSTOR, Free to Anyone in the World

This article is one of nearly 500,000 scholarly works digitized and made freely available to everyone in the world by JSTOR.

Known as the Early Journal Content, this set of works include research articles, news, letters, and other writings published in more than 200 of the oldest leading academic journals. The works date from the mid-seventeenth to the early twentieth centuries.

We encourage people to read and share the Early Journal Content openly and to tell others that this resource exists. People may post this content online or redistribute in any way for non-commercial purposes.

Read more about Early Journal Content at <http://about.jstor.org/participate-jstor/individuals/early-journal-content>.

JSTOR is a digital library of academic journals, books, and primary source objects. JSTOR helps people discover, use, and build upon a wide range of content through a powerful research and teaching platform, and preserves this content for future generations. JSTOR is part of ITHAKA, a not-for-profit organization that also includes Ithaka S+R and Portico. For more information about JSTOR, please contact support@jstor.org.

GUSTAF RETZIUS

By N. C. NELSON

ANTHROPOLOGY recently lost a distinguished worker in the person of Gustaf Retzius, Emeritus Professor of Anatomy at the Caroline Institute in Stockholm, who died July 21, 1919, in the seventy-seventh year of his age.

Sweden, during the last two centuries, has given to the world several names that must forever remain inscribed in the annals of science. Whether Gustaf Retzius belongs to this group only time can tell; but, certainly, it is seldom given to any single individual to render service to science on so monumental a scale and at the same time service of such uniformly high quality. Primarily a pioneer in modern medical research and in the development of histological technique, he found time also to contribute important works on physical anthropology, one brief paper being a description of the skeletal material obtained by G. Nordenskiöld from the cliff-dwellings of the Mesa Verde in Colorado. It is fitting to recall also that his father before him—Anders Retzius—was an enthusiastic anthropologist and that he too wrote several brief papers on American subjects.

The following intimate remarks on the career of Gustaf Retzius are based mostly on accounts in the Stockholm papers for July 22, and largely on the appreciation penned by Prof. Carl M. Furst, one of his oldest students as well as his lifelong friend and co-worker.

Gustaf Retzius was born in Stockholm in 1842. His family belonged to the learned aristocracy of Sweden, there being three generations of naturalists behind him on his father's side and several men of science on his mother's side as well. His father, Anders Retzius, himself a noted anatomist, was a born genius, always bubbling over with original ideas, few of which however were carried to completion. Growing up in a stimulating atmosphere of this kind it was but natural that the young Retzius should follow in

his father's footsteps. Accordingly, he graduated in medicine in 1871 and in 1878 was appointed Professor of Anatomy and Histology in which capacity he continued active with but few interruptions to the time of his death. Aside from his successful labors as a teacher, his scientific investigations range over the wide field from protoplasm to human craniology, with special attention as a rule to histology or minute structure. He has contributed more or less voluminous monographs, *e.g.*, on protoplasm, on spermatozoa, on the eye, the ear, the brain, and the nervous system, in addition to his more strictly anthropological papers. His biological publications alone comprise nineteen folio volumes with copious illustrations, many of them in his own hand. Altogether he left behind approximately five hundred important titles, two hundred and fifty of which are listed in his memorial volume.

The extraordinary volume of Retzius' labors is explained in part by the fact that he was able to finance his own publications, which he put out in superb style. Another explanation was his ability to inspire others to assist him, including both his wife and his mother. Back of it all, however, was his own genuine love for work.

One of the interruptions in his scientific career was the interval of 1884-87 when as editor-in-chief of one of the Stockholm dailies, *Aftonbladet*, the idealistic side of his nature had free play. As a young man he had tried his hand at poetry, had in fact won the Academy prize for a collection of sonnets. With his sister he had also translated and published many of Burns' poems and in later days he found time to compose cantatas, as for example on the occasion of the Linnaeus Celebration in 1907. In his new capacity as editor he took hold of a financially and politically bankrupt journal and in three years transformed it into a strong thoroughly progressive sheet. To indicate his liberal attitude it will be enough to mention that he did the unheard of thing of appointing a woman to the staff of the foreign department. For the rest he solicited articles from the ablest and most prominent men and women of the day. All social and humanitarian as well as pedagogical and scientific questions were presented. Art and literature likewise

received due share of attention. For himself Retzius wrote a series of biographies, travel sketches and popular scientific articles; but he tried his hand also at political leaders, literary notices and when necessary delivered small talks and poems. For a time it looked as if he would let slip his scientific interests.

To a man of such gifts and such industry the highest honors and recognitions came as a matter of course from every quarter of the globe. Retzius was perhaps less well known in America than was his due; yet he had traveled here and was an honorary member, *e.g.*, of the Washington and Philadelphia Academies of Science. His last and most prized reward came to him from the Swedish Academy of Science, on the occasion of his seventieth birthday, in the shape of a memorial volume consisting chiefly of anatomical studies.

Although the writer was not personally acquainted with the deceased, he may venture to pay his own respects by referring once more to Retzius as an anthropologist. His interest in the subject was unquestionably instilled by the father, who is the recognized founder of modern craniometry. The elder Retzius died in his prime, in 1860, leaving a number of scattered brief papers. These papers, four years later, were gathered together and published with a foreword by the son as the first evidence of his interest in the subject. He was only twenty-two years of age at the time. In looking over the volume, it appears that the father as early as 1842 had made a beginning in classifying the human races on the cephalic-gnatic index basis and that in 1860 he presented before the Swedish Academy a map of the world showing the cephalic index distribution—a map which in all general respects is identical with that published by Ripley in 1899. On the basis of these investigations Anders Retzius became the first to recognize the mixed character of Europe's population and thus to challenge the validity of the Aryan hypothesis.

The most noteworthy publications by Gustaf Retzius himself commence with "Finnish Craniology" (Swedish, 1878), a title which covers in fact a considerable sketch of Finnish culture in all of its phases past and present, besides a brief chapter on the sup-

posed former distribution of Lapps in Finland. The somatic division of the treatise includes observations and measurements on ninety-two living subjects leading to the recognition of two essentially different race elements as having entered into the Finnish population proper. Approximately ninety skulls were also obtained. For eighty of these he calculated the cephalic index merely while thirty of them were subjected to a more complete series of measurements.

The next work, "Ancient Swedish Crania" (Swedish ed. 1899, German 1900), is a well rounded, sumptuously illustrated report on somewhat more than one hundred skulls, fairly evenly distributed over the Neolithic, the Bronze, and the Iron ages. The results prove that the population of Sweden from the earliest times has been overwhelmingly dolicocephalic but that all along there has been present a slowly increasing admixture of brachycephalics, the exact origin of which is uncertain. The report proper is preceded by a valuable review of the general investigation of Europe's past and present racial characteristics.

The last important contribution, a joint work entitled, "Swedish Anthropology" (German ed., 1902), is a statistical study of army recruits. It was a labor of love, done with governmental sanction but at private expense. The investigation covers measurements and observations on the army contingents for 1897 and 98, in all about 45,000 subjects of the age of twenty-one. The general results show that the so-called pure Nordic type—tall, dolicocephalic, light hair and blue eyes—which constitutes more than ten percent of the entire population, is numerically strongest in what may be roughly designated as the interior central section of Sweden and that it becomes rarer towards the coast and also northwards and southwards owing to intermixture of other race types.

In conclusion it will be of interest to remark that Retzius was somewhat concerned as to the ultimate fate of his pure blond race. As is made evident in his Huxley lecture of 1909, he seemingly took the view of certain German writers that the North European race branch has for some thousands of years been slowly but steadily yielding ground to the short, dark, brachycephalic race branch, at

home perhaps originally in Asia but for a long time dominant also in central and southeastern Europe. Furthermore, it was his opinion that the Nordic temperament is not adaptable to the coming industrial type of civilization. But whether or not Retzius was temporarily blind to the fact that in the struggle for existence under the new order of things the qualities of character commonly associated with the North European will still be in demand, he was thoroughly sensible of the importance and also of the delicacy of the whole question involved, and one cannot but feel that in these social and political aspects of anthropology he would have been a safe and sane guide.

AMERICAN MUSEUM
OF NATURAL HISTORY,
NEW YORK CITY.